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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Yesterday major media reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu plans to travel to Washington in two weeks to take part in this November's United Jewish Communities General Assembly (GA), where he is expected to meet President Obama. HaQaretz quoted sources in the Prime Minister's Office as saying over the weekend that in view of

the rapprochement between Israel and the American administration, a meeting with Obama, who is scheduled to speak at the GA, is likely.

HaQaretz reported that on Friday, Obama spoke to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas about resuming the peace process, and stressed his personal commitment to establishing a Palestinian state. Abbas said he, too, was committed to the peace process, and called for a halt to construction in West Bank settlements. HaQaretz reported that U.S. Special Envoy Senator George Mitchell is due to arrive in Israel on Wednesday to discuss ways of jumpstarting the peace process. HaQaretz cited the hope of Jerusalem officials that by the time Netanyahu reaches Washington, the gaps with the Palestinians will have been bridged and the talks will have resumed.

The media reported that PM Netanyahu instructed Justice Minister Yaakov Ne'eman to coordinate the task force, which will present its recommendations as to Israel's course of action on the Goldstone report and its ramifications. The team will make recommendations on what should be done in the diplomatic, legal, and public relations planes. The PM was quoted as saying during the meeting that the establishment of an investigation committee was "not an option." "IDF soldiers and officers will not be subjected to investigation," he stressed. Over the last couple of days the media cited Netanyahu's wriggling interpretations of his own remark to The Washington Post (published on Saturday): "We're looking into [conducting an independent inquiry] not because of the Goldstone report but because of our own internal needs." HaQaretz quoted an official at the Prime Minister's Office as saying that there were "differing opinions on what should be done." Media quoted DM Ehud Barak as saying that "we sent the fighters on the mission and they deserve our full support." "Israel is prepared to fight against the legitimacy of the Goldstone report. In addition, Israel will act to amend rules of war to adjust them to the battle against terrorists who fight from among civilians," he said. HaQaretz quoted a government aide speaking on condition of anonymity as saying that Netanyahu and Barak voiced hope that "this move will put the issue to rest." Israel Radio quoted Labor Knesset Member Ophir Pines-Paz and eminent jurist Ruth Gabison -- a member of the Winograd Commission of investigation into the Second Lebanon War -- as saying that an independent body should probe Operation Cast Lead. The Jerusalem Post reported that in a non-binding resolution, top Democratic and Republican foreign affairs leaders in the U.S. Congress are calling on the Obama administration to quash the Goldstone report.

All media reported that after two weeks of relative quiet in the Jerusalem area, disturbances again broke out in the city and its periphery yesterday morning. Shortly after the Temple Mount was opened up to tourists and other non-Muslim visitors, several dozen Palestinians began throwing stones at both police and tourists. The police attempted to disperse the stone throwers and the Temple Mount was closed to visitors. Dozens of Palestinian worshippers on the Temple Mount were reportedly injured. Among those detained was Hatem Abdel Kader, who holds the Jerusalem portfolio in the Fatah leadership. Yesterday's disturbances appear to have been sparked, as in the past, by printed announcements by Jewish groups seeking to gain access to the Temple Mount to pray. A meeting of Religious-Zionist rabbis on the same topic took place in the evening at the Chief Rabbinate's building in Jerusalem. The northern branch of the Islamic Movement and other parties, including Abdel Kader, called on the Palestinian public to come to the Temple Mount to defend it. The confrontations then ensued. A senior member of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement, Ali Abu Sheikha, was detained yesterday in the Old City on suspicion of disturbing the peace and calling on Muslims on the scene to go out and demonstrate. Israel Radio reported that the PA asked U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to dispatch a special envoy to oversee events in Jerusalem. Leading media reported that Jordan has demanded that Israel refrain from provocations in Jerusalem and at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and that Egypt also complained to Israel.

The media cited low-key ties with Jordan as the countries mark 15 years of diplomatic relations. Yediot reported that 15 Jordanians are studying emergency medicine at Beersheva University. Yesterday The Jerusalem Post reported that Vice PM Silvan Shalom called last week's offer to Iran a "bad mistake" that the world will pay for in the near future.

All media reported that on Saturday President Abbas called for presidential elections on January 24.

HaQaretz reported that the U.N. has asked Israel for clarifications on "listening devices" that the Lebanese authorities claim were revealed near the village of Hula in southern Lebanon last week. The request was made following an official Lebanese petition to the U.N. Israel neither denied nor confirmed that it had placed intelligence-gathering equipment in the area, but informed the U.N. that collecting intelligence in southern Lebanon will continue as long as the government in Beirut is not in full control of its territory. Last Wednesday, a tripartite meeting was held at the UNIFIL base near the Rosh Hanikra border crossing between representatives of Israel, Lebanon, and the U.N. regarding recent tensions in the area.

Leading media reported that two IDF soldiers have been expelled from their brigade and sentenced to 20 days in military prison for waving a pro-settler banner during their swearing-in ceremony last week. The soldiers served in the Kfir Brigade, an infantry unit originally set up to battle Palestinian militants in the West Bank. HaQaretz reported that a military spokesman called the incident "a disgraceful disciplinary aberration." Leading media quoted IDF Chief-of-Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi as saying that political exploitation of soldiers is forbidden. The contentious banner, which the soldiers held at their swearing-in ceremony Thursday at the Western Wall, bore the message: "We did not enlist in order to evacuate Jews." Leading media reported that settler leaders are set to consider whether Pinchas Wallerstein can remain in his post as Director-General of the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories because he objected to those protest actions.

HaQaretz and Israel Radio reported that today the Knesset's Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee will discuss a bill forbidding the commemoration of the Nakba.

Yesterday Yediot quoted U.S. Consul-General in Israel Andrew Parker as saying in the course of a meeting with officials from the Israeli Foreign Ministry that in the past year requests for visas filed at the American Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Consulate-General in Jerusalem fell by about 25 percent. This amounts to a decline of about fifty thousand Israeli petitions and a loss of some \$5-6 million in income for the Embassy in Tel Aviv alone.. The Consul-General explained the phenomenon as resulting from the world economic crisis. Meanwhile, Yediot reported that the number of rejected visa requests rose over the past year from 3 percent to 5.1 percent. Such an increase could hinder Israeli efforts to join the U.S. visa exemption program, currently enjoyed by 35 countries around the world.

The Jerusalem Post reported that last week several teens from Ashkelon brutally attacked a female American tourist after being asked to quiet down. The woman's family subsequently shelved its plans to immigrate to Israel.

Yediot and HaQaretz reported that Israeli director Oren Peli's short horror movie *QParanormal ActivityQ* tops the blockbuster list in the U.S.

Mideast:

Block Quotes:

II. "The Big American Freeze"

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (10/26): *Q*The President of the United States and senior officials have repeatedly announced that they consider final status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) as high priority.... The fly in the ointment here is the PA. It forcefully insists that it won't even meet formally with Israel until all construction in all Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem stops completely. Already, however, U.S.-Israel discussions have moved past that

point. We don't know precisely where they stand, but clearly the administration isn't pushing for a total halt and it isn't pushing all that urgently on the issue. Therefore, while Israel has succeeded in conciliating the U.S., the PA is defying Washington. We know that it's serious in doing so because of what has just happened with the Goldstone report in the UN. The administration asked the PA not to take a lead role in pushing the report; the PA complied for about 48 hours and then internal pressure forced it to

go back on its word. Most of this pressure was not the masses spontaneous outrage but from the hard-line elements which dominate the ruling Fatah group as well as in the PA itself.

II. "Forget about Proportionality"

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (10/27): QIsraelQs enemies are counting on the Goldstone report. They will launch rockets into Tel Aviv, and the world will stop Israel from carrying out punitive measures in an attempt to deter them. They are wrong. Israel cannot afford to wait until its ground forces act successfully in Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, or anywhere else to reduce the rhythm of the rocket fire. Time is a critical component, and successful movement on the ground is a matter of days and weeks, which means more losses and more critical hits on the home front. Hundreds of rockets that will penetrate the Israeli-American defenses require an immediate response from Israel. Here, then, is the cruel and simple equation: the more effective the terrorist rocket war becomes, the less QproportionateQ the response will be, in the terms of the old wars. In such a situation, a massive punitive blow painful enough to make the enemy stop firing will strike infrastructures and locations by air and by land. If the world expects Israel to strike only at military targets and run after every rocket or launching area, it expects us to commit suicide. That is not the right war. The more painful the blow to the enemyQs critical areas, the better the chance that it will be more quickly convinced.

III. "A Seething Volcano"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (10/26): QThe clashes yesterday between Israeli police who entered the Temple Mount plaza and Palestinian stone throwers and inciters seemingly ended calmly.... Yet it is that very routine which indicates that the Temple Mount is behaving like an active, simmering volcano; the timing of its next major eruption is impossible to gauge. The government's attitude, by which it views these events as just another competitive front between Israel and the Palestinians, is likely to foment a violent outburst which will ignite the entire Middle East. The trepidation of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims from what is referred to as the QJudaization of Jerusalem,Q or the Jewish takeover of the Temple Mount, cannot be overstated.... [The policeQs success] will be measured by its ability to hold a dialogue and reach understandings with the Muslim interlocutors in order to prevent a conflagration.

IV. "Does Israel Control the Temple Mount?"

Former editor-in-chief Moshe Ishon wrote in the editorial of the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (10/26): QThe closure of the Temple Mount to the Jews causes a great detriment to IsraelQs sovereignty. Instead of removing the rioters from the site and [protecting the honor of the remnant of the Temple, [the Israeli authorities] responsible for keeping the law in Israel chose for some reason to harm the honor of the State of Israel, Judaism, and the Torah. This is a problematic behavior that has more drawbacks than advantages.

IV. QLook Eastward

Oded Eran, Director of the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, who served as Israel's Ambassador to Jordan and as Deputy Director General for Economic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry (10/26): QInstead of overreaching by demanding normalized relations with the countries of North Africa, Israel would do better to focus on normalizing relations with countries in closer geographical proximity. Developing energy, water and transportation networks

with those countries is more important to securing peace and stabilizing it. Israel must try to develop a diplomatic-economic dialogue with Jordan and expropriate it from the security officials currently in charge of it. As much as a dialogue on security issues is important, it isn't enough.

VI. Q15 Years of Peace"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (10/26): QIt's not exactly the peace Yitzhak Rabin, King Hussein, and Bill Clinton envisioned when Jordan and Israel signed their treaty on October 26, 1994 at what is today the Arava Border Crossing connecting Aqaba and Eilat. And yet this unsatisfactory peace trumps what preceded it.... Opposition to Israel-Jordan normalization is driven not only by tendentious Arab satellite news coverage, but also by Jordan's semi-tolerated Islamist opposition, which includes the parliamentary Islamic Action Front bloc and the Muslim Brotherhood. Anti-normalization campaigners maintain a blacklist of Jordanian companies, journalists, academics, and cultural figures that have contact with Israel. Jordanians who appear on the same dais as Israelis are invariably either government officials or forced to take chances because of their dependence on European or American largesse. Because of internal pressures, Jordan needs momentum in the stalled negotiating process between Israel and the Palestinians, perhaps more than the parties themselves. Unfortunately, by being tone deaf to reasonable Israeli concerns, and oblivious to Palestinian intransigence, Amman has abdicated a more constructive role in bringing the parties closer together. It needn't be so.

VII. "A Nation in a Coma"

Contributor Haim Assa wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (10/267): QIsrael is in a coma not only because of its sedated government. It is in a coma because it lacks any political discourse. Because one side (the Left) has betrayed those who sent it. For how can it be explained that nobody, as of yet, has criticized Operation Cast Lead? Yes, the operation itself. The fact that the IDF granted Hamas what Hamas was seeking. The Goldstone report. This does not mean that the IDF is unethical. The IDF is the most ethical army in the world, but precisely because of this we emerge as idiots. Both ethical and appearing as war criminals in a war that achieved nothing. This is what ought to be investigated. The IDF apparently does not know how to wage a war against a terror organization. It fails to comprehend its own objectives as well as the objectives of the enemy it faces. But my emphasis is on the lack of criticism. If there were a Left, there would be criticism. There would be a debate. It would also benefit the right in understanding where it lives. It would help all of us understand where we are living. This way we all find ourselves in a vacuum.

CUNNINGHAM